THE TATLER.

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GLANCES AT NEW BOOKS.

On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures. By Charles Babbage, Esq. A.M. &c. London: Knight, 1832.

THE BOOK TRADE—BOOKSELLER'S PROFITS.

This work is exciting, just now, a good deal of attention, which the interesting variety of its subjects, together with the masterly manner in which they are handled, will be found amply to reward. The author's general acquaintance with science, and his known acuteness, are guarantees to the reader, that the facts presented to him are correctly stated; and therefore any difference of opinion which may arise in the perusal will not be with regard to the facts, but to the inferences drawn from them. We have heard some objections from persons engaged in business, to the unreserve with which, what are generally considered, the secrets of trade are here disclosed; but this objection at any rate is not likely to be displeasing to the general reader, and is in itself, we suspect, more the result of an habitual feeling in such matters, than of any inherent solidity. If the profits in any trade are inordinate, it is well that the public should know it; and if they are not, we see no rational object to be attained by secrecy; for everybody will be willing to pay, above the actual cost of an article, such a degree of profit as may enable the vendor of it to serve him with it when he wants it: and even supposing otherwise, the mutual interests and convenience of the two parties must eventually bring about a fair remuneration to the vendor. It must be admitted, however, that temporary dissatisfaction may be created by revealing the profits in any given trade, because, in the absence of a knowledge of all the circumstances connected with that trade, they may appear out of reasonable proportion. We may illustrate this remark by referring to a chapter in the present volume, (the 29th), 'On the combinations of masters against the public.' In this chapter the public are let into all the arcana of the book trade,—the actual cost of the book, the price from the author to the publisher, from the publisher to the retail bookseller, &c. &c. besides a great deal of information as to the proceedings of booksellers, to secure to themselves a certain fixed profit, and to push off the works they publish. We think all this will be useful when properly sifted and correctly understood; but, that in the mean time, some misconception will prevail, if the deductions which the author draws from his facts are understood without some qualification.

The readers and purchasers of books are pretty well acquainted with the fact, that some time ago the leading booksellers combined together to prevent any retail bookseller from selling new works at less than ten per cent under the publishing price. This combination produced the desired effect; nearly all the trade signed an agreement, binding themselves not to sell but at the terms prescribed; and the effect to the public is, that they cannot, as before the combination, go and buy a new work for *ready money*, at 20 per cent. under the marked price. So far it would seem that the public have been aggrieved; and it must be confessed that it is not easy to find out on what principle the seller of an article can be justified in dictating to the purchaser the terms on which only he may resell it. The law, therefore, we should think, must look with at least its usual doubtful aspect on the combiners. But still there is another view to be taken of the subject, and it arises out of the peculiar nature of the article in which booksellers deal, and which article so far differs from most articles subject to sale and purchase, as to render equitable, different regulations from those by which other trades are governed. Mr Babbage argues the case upon general principles, and *prima facie* makes out a case against the booksellers; but, concurring as we do with most of his reasoning, we think we see in it a mixture of fallacy. For instance, after entering into a detail of the progress of a six shilling volume, in cost, from 2*s.* 3½*d.*,* the value of paper and print, to 3*s.* 10*d.* the price allowed to the author,—4*s.* 2*d.* and 4*s.* 6*d.* the prices, according to circumstances, which the retail bookseller pays,—to 6*s.*, the ultimate price to the public, he says:—

'The volume thus purchased of the publisher at 4*s.* 2*d.* or 4*s.* 6*d.* is retailed by the bookseller to the public at 6*s.* In the one case he makes a profit of 44, in the other of 33 per cent. Even the smaller of these two rates of profit, on the capital employed, certainly appears to be too large. It sometimes happens that when a purchaser enquires for a book, the retail dealer sends across the street to the wholesale agent, and so gives for this trifling service one-fourth part of the money the purchaser pays; and perhaps the retail dealer also takes six months' credit for the price which the volume actually costs him. It is stated that all retail booksellers allow to their customers a discount of 10 per cent. upon orders above 20 shillings, and that therefore the nominal profit of 44 or 33 per cent. is considerably reduced. If this is the case, it may fairly be enquired why the price of 2*l.* for example, is printed upon the back of a book, when every bookseller is ready to sell it at 1*l.* 16*s.* and why those who are unacquainted with that circumstance, should be made to pay more than others who are better informed? Another reason has been assigned for the great profit charged upon books, namely, that the purchasers take long credit. This is probably a fact, and admitting it, no reasonable person can object to a proportionate increase of price. But certainly, it is equally clear, that gentlemen who do pay ready money, should not be charged the same price as those who defer their payments to a very remote period. In the country, there is a greater appearance of reason for a considerable allowance between the retail dealer and the public; because the profit of the country bookseller will be diminished by the expense of the conveyance of the books from London, but even in this case, it appears to be too large, when compared with the rate of interest which capital produces in other trades.

'That the profit in retailing books is really too large is proved by two circumstances:—First, that the same nominal rate of profit has existed in the bookselling trade for a long series of years, notwithstanding the great fluctuations in the rate of profit on capital invested in every other business. Secondly, that until very lately, a multitude of booksellers, in all parts of London, were willing to be satisfied with a much smaller profit, and to sell for ready money, or at short credit, to persons of undoubted character, at a profit of only 10 per cent. and in some instances even at a still smaller per centage, instead of that of 25 per cent. on the published price.

'It cannot be pretended that this high rate of profit is necessary to cover the risk of the bookseller having some copies left on his shelves, because he need not buy of the publisher a single copy more than he has orders for: and even if he do purchase more

* This price is the cost of a volume of which 3,000 copies are printed; the cost would be more if a small number were printed.

at the subscription price, he proves by that very purchase, that he himself does not estimate that risk at above from 4 to 8 per cent. It should also be remarked, that the publisher is generally a retail as well as a wholesale bookseller; and that besides the profit which he realizes on every copy sold by him in his capacity of agent, he is allowed to charge the author as if every copy had been subscribed for at 4*s.* 2*d.*, and of course he receives the same profit as the rest of the trade for those retailed in his shop.'

Not being practically acquainted with the bookselling business, it is probable that in the remarks we are about to make we shall fall into some errors; but as we have no private object to serve, we are quite open to correction. First of all then, it appears to us that whether the booksellers' profit be or be not too large, the mode adopted by Mr Babbage to estimate it is not the correct one. On a six-shilling volume, Mr Babbage's for instance, a bookseller gets a profit of 1*s.* 6*d.* or 1*s.* 10*d.*, that is 33 or 44 per cent. Now if this were an average profit there could be no hesitation in pronouncing it too large, but that is not the fact; it is the highest gross profit on a book bought and sold immediately, and the profit is fixed at the rate mentioned, to enable the bookseller to sustain losses unavoidably incurred in the purchase and retail of other books. It may be that the profit is too high even for that purpose, and that we think probable; but still it should be borne in mind that the principle must be recognised unless the whole economy of the book-trade be changed. Mr Babbage indeed says, in the extract above, 'It cannot be pretended that this high rate of profit is necessary to cover the risk of the bookseller having some copies left on his shelves; because he need not buy of the publisher a single copy more than he has orders for.' Now, is there not a fallacy here? It is true, if the bookseller is a mere agent, he need buy only the books ordered of him, but the question to be asked here is,—Is he a mere agent? We think the answer must be—Certainly not. A part of his business it is true may consist of mere agency; inasmuch as some of his customers on seeing a book announced may send to him to buy it: in this case he need buy no more than he is ordered, and his profit (taking the single case) may be too much. But this is only a part and we should imagine but a small part of many booksellers' businesses. For the remainder 'tyrant custom' has made necessary a shop and a general assortment of books, by the exhibition of which, the chance customer and the regular one too, may be tempted to expend their money. Mr Babbage's argument presupposes that this is unnecessary, and he instances the case of a purchaser enquiring for a book, and the retail dealer sending across the street to the wholesale agent for it. But surely this is taking a very partial view of the business, for in the very instance cited it is ten to one that the wholesale agent does not live just across the street, and if so, the probability is that the purchaser walks on to another shop and there makes his purchase. Hence proceeds the inducement to have a shop and furnish it with probable articles of sale. But this is not all. Experience we are persuaded is conclusive as to the fact, that the bringing of books in contact as it were, with purchasers, is one of the principal means of diffusing them. A gentleman goes into a shop to buy a volume; while he waits he sees a variety of books which he has seen advertised; something about them, a passage he may chance to read, the beauty of their exterior, their cheapness with relation to their size, or something before uncontemplated, takes his fancy, and the consequence is, either an immediate addition to his purchase, or the seed is sown of another visit. So much for the advantage of having a stock, an advantage in which booksellers, publishers, and authors are all more or less interested. With regard to the profit, that it should be *nominally* large on all is necessary because *in reality* it is only large on some; and though it may appear hard that a saleable book should be charged high because a bookseller has bought other books which he cannot sell, we do not see how it is avoidable; it is one of the conditions on which only he can carry on his business. In other words, a bookseller, we assume, is obliged to keep a stock of books, that stock must for convenience sake consist of what are called standard books, and some of the modern and fugitive publications of the day. Now what is his rate of profit on all these books? 33 per cent Mr Babbage would say *if* he sell them all. But this *if* overturns the whole argument, and converts the 33 per cent into a merely nominal profit. The reality we have no means of knowing, and it must vary with every individual's business, but common observation will enable us to approximate towards the truth. Some years ago the principal booksellers gave evidence on the subject of copyright, from which it appeared that but a small proportion of the books published met with sufficient sale to cover expences. It follows from this that on a considerable number of works published by the trade there must be a loss,* and therefore no statement of a bookseller's profit can be correct, which does not take into consideration the losses which he has to set off against it. In order to estimate whether the nominal rate of profit is too high it would be desirable to know what is the average profit a bookseller makes on a given number of books within a given time. Even this cannot be ascertained by the public, but he may learn something from the following generalities:—

On a certain number of books he gets 33 per cent, on some even 44 per cent., but there are many by which he loses all that he expends, and others on which the returns vary from the highest profit to the greatest possible loss. The result is something like this, which *might be* a bookseller's account for a given period.

Books bought:—			Profit.	Profit per cent.
Cost £400, the whole sold for	£576	. . . . .	£176 —	£44
400, ditto	532	. . . . .	132 —	33
400, three-fourths sold	432	. . . . .	32 —	8
400, ditto	400	. . . . .	nothing —	—
200, two-thirds sold .	177	loss £23 ;	11½ per ct.	
100, one-third sold .	45	55 ;	55	
100, one-fourth sold .	33	67 ;	67	
	2195			
2000	2000		profit 340	
			loss 145	
Profit	£195			
			Net profit £195 or 9¾ per ct.	

The above statement gives a profit of 9¾ per cent. on an expenditure of £2000; no doubt many booksellers do better; there can be as little that some do worse.

Our limits oblige us to stop here. Probably in our next number we shall return to the subject.

* Not, perhaps, on the majority; because a great many are published at the risk of the authors, with respect to which the bookseller's risk is confined to such sums as he may have advanced for paper, printing, or 'by anticipation,' to the author.

JOURNEYING ON THE GREAT WESTERN CANAL, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

TO THE TATLER.

Dear Tatler,—I think I left you somewhere in sight of Salina or Syracuse, in the State of New York,—or rather you left me thereabouts,—but we may as well jog on to the Lakes together; all this wild country is still new to us, and almost everything yet to be said of it in detail; for it is telling us nothing to say that the waters of the Erie are made to run over this vast track, and descend 360 or 70 miles to the Hudson,—opening a main artery for the commerce of this busy country; and truly we have heard of these vast Lakes,—these inland seas,

whose shores are hundreds of miles apart, whose waves are as troublesome in storms as the ocean's, whose margins are yet for the most part wild and unexplored, still untrodden wilderness, and will be for many years to come; not including the still more remote and western, on which the numerous steam-boats between Buffalo and Detroit have yet made 'no sign,' 'no call;' great part of Huron, the Michigan and Superior, &c. In travelling, if not *minute*, we are nothing. What do I care, for instance, for this man's or that man's getting over so much land or water, if he will not condescend to let me know familiarly what he hears and sees within a few yards of him—what people say, what he says, what he does. General features of a country are always barren; so is generalizing altogether; and thence it is, I think, that we yet want a good entertaining traveller for America. Mr de Vigne says little or nothing, considering the quantity of ground he got over; and Mrs Trollope staid so long at Cincinnati and the Ohio, that she was obliged to wade all the rest in generalities.

I do think, apropos of this diversified way of seeing things, that I could send you twenty papers—true, and and of course highly interesting papers, of my travels, without stirring a peg further towards the lakes, or even peeping out of one of the fourteen windows of the packet-line canal-boat; nor indeed will I stir an inch further this whole paper, just to shew you that I am not a *hasty traveller!* and above all, am extremely capricious. But I have better reasons, and as plenty as blackberries: first of all, I wish to mention Onondago Hollow, just over the larboard quarter, as sailors would say, of our boat; not two miles behind us,—a very peculiarly pleasant village, of two rival stores, two churches, and only one tavern! and there I have a kind of dreamy recollection of having had the nicest breakfast (when travelling on four wheels) of anywhere on the road; the beef-steaks were more tender, the eggs fresher, bread nicer, butter more aromatic, pickles of a more delicate conservation, coffee stronger, green young hyson, of more of the *Hoppo* fragrance! Yes, verily, this was the most pleasant 'Hollow' I came across t'other side the Atlantic. The cause of all this sat demurely in a corner of the room, as we worked away with the increased appetites of a cold, vamped, teasing, dark, wet night. There she sat, a very pretty creature, the daughter of the house. She 'tended on the stage-folks,' but in such a way as to let us know she was no servant. Dear girl! don't imagine I dared accuse you; mine was a glance of entreaty for another cup of tea—the half-suppressed 'will you be so kind!' I was, besides, particular in paying homage with my eyes; but I have reason to think she took no more notice of me than of daddy's tom-cat, who sat the very image of sleepy wisdom on a sunny chair, not far from this fair daughter of this pleasant Hollow. Said I to myself, that girl will make a good wife; witness these steaks, eggs, toast, tea and coffee! 'twas the very touchstone of a dainty housewife's merit. Now, whether she was destined to be the wife of a smartish Jehu who drove us, and who uttered not one word more than, 'Well, Rachael, how goes it?' to her, or of some other expectorating lout, I cannot form any notion—but she was a great deal too good for any I happened to meet on this line of road, even all the way from Buffalo. Why have I forgotten her father's name, and the name of his sign? he, poor man, was excessively busy, serving *julap* out, caged up in his bar—gin sling and whiskey drams—and round about the penetralia pinned to the walls and bar, were notices of sales (*vendus*), and election puffs and addresses, and great was the talk of the 'Almighty' genius of the various candidates! I was determined to recollect my pretty *genius loci*—and now, Rachael, if perchance a *Tatler* is ever wafted to thy neat parlour, perhaps you'll be grateful to 'that Englisher!'

Hallo there! boat ahoy! pull up a minute under that 'ere bridge, that I may jump in off it—what savages they are, they never stop—so I ran along, soon caught them, and getting on the next bridge, jumped down on the roof and deck, just as she glided under it: a little urchin, with a basket of chesnuts fresh gathered, did the same, and soon sold his little cargo—two cents for a handfull. When I got down in the cabin, there were two judges, one captain, and a grocer, still at a game at whist, which had already lasted 'pretty considerable' from one meal to another. 'Judge—Just shew me that 'ere last trick.'—'Well, Sir, I guess you can see it.'—'Well, any how I've played off the damndest!'—'Captain—May be you led trumps?'—'Gosh, partner, that's a reneage, and no backing out.'—'Judge—Sir, you're on the sly! Well, now, you're a 'cute un! hum!' (a pause).—'Second Judge—Come, gentlemen, keep moving, we've fixed you to the nine holes any how! ha, ha! The steward's awaiting to set the tables. Whereaway are we now?'—'Why, Sir, it's my opinion we an't got to the nine-mile creek by a good bit.'

[To be continued.]

A LIST OF SWEETNESSES.

'Tis sweet to love in early life,
When youth is in its bounding spring,
And day succeeds to day, more rife
With hopes of gladness on its wing;
When the fresh spirit's burning touch
Can give to day-dreams hues of brightness,
And seems reality to clutch,
Each vision formed by fancy's lightness.

'Tis sweet when all the fear we feel
Is but to wound another's heart;
When pardon treads upon the heel
Of each offence that caused a smart;
In later life we cannot yield;
The heart, as it grows old, gets tougher;
And the proud spirit, sternly steel'd,
Will wreak revenge, though self may suffer.

'Tis sweet to hang upon a smile,
To dwell upon one gentle word,
The bosom then, devoid of guile,
Believes in what is seen and heard:
In later life a smile's a lie,
A word is but a fiend-like traitor,
That lures us with it to the sky,
To drop us over Etna's Crater.

'Tis sweet to foppify one's form,
In hopes to please the eyes we love:
How the warm life-pulse beats more warm,
If we but think those eyes approve.
In later life we never tie
The stiff cravat with bliss so thrilling,
As when we deem that to one eye,
It's studied influence must be killing.

'Tis sweet to think a pair of lips
Wear cherry ripeness for our kiss;
We overlook the dull eclipse
In which Heaven form'd our ugliness.
In later life now, we should say,—
'Why what a size is my proboscis!
'Tis certain I was in the way
Where nature gave away large noses.'

'Tis sweet to sit beside *that one*
Whom we would challenge from a world,
As doom'd by Love and Fate our own,
Ere we were on existence hurl'd:—
We never think, if truth were told,
The fair might wish us further from her,
That reading names in love enroll'd
In pairs we made a slight misnomer.

'Tis sweet to hear a kind reply,
When faithful Love has asked its meed,—
To see affection's beaming eye
Smile on the passion which we plead:
We never think, poor souls, not we,
The fair our pleading could not suffer,
Though utter'd on a bending knee,
Had she but had another offer.

And more than all the rest, 'tis sweet
To walk by *moonlight with one dear*,
To clasp her waist, and soft repeat
Stale nonsense in her ravish'd ear:—
'Tis sweet—but why enumerate
The thousand sweetnesses of passion?
Since many doom'd to love by Fate,
Find out its sweetnesses by fashion.

GANYMEDE.

(From the German of Goethe.)

Round me in morning splendour glows
Beloved, delicious Spring! revealing
Fresh joys, until my heart o'erflows
With ever vehement and holy feeling.

Thee, had I in these arms, O Spring!
Upon thy breast I lie and languish;
Unto thy flowers and grasses cling.
Thou cool'st my bosom's burning anguish.

Sweet wind! through which the nightingale
To me calls fondly from its misty vale.

I come! I come! But where? above!—
The clouds incline to longing love.
To me!—in your lap up! embraced,
Embracing! Father, in thy bosom placed!

C. H.

THEATRICALS.

HAYMARKET.

A NEW serious drama, entitled *A Duel in Richelieu's Time*, was last night produced at this theatre. The story is of the time of Louis the Thirteenth of France, when Cardinal Richelieu held the reins of power. In the first act we find *Madame* (the widow) *de Luynes* (Miss Taylor) imploring the *Count de Chalais* (Mr Vining) to exert his interest with the King (of whom he is a favourite) in behalf of *Le Duc de Chartreux* (Mr Cooper) whose life has become forfeited. The favourite has been long enamoured of *Madame de Luynes*, notwithstanding which he is not forward to undertake her suit, until a word, dropt from her in the impetuosity of the moment, lets him into the secret that his love is returned. He leaves her, repairs to the King, and obtains the pardon. Meantime the courtiers appear, speculating on the events of the day; the most conspicuous among them is *Armand de Retz, Abbé de Gondi* (Mr Webster), a dissolute son of the church, whose devotion is chiefly to the fair sex, and who makes no secret of his gallantries. He communicates to his companion that the Cardinal has got a new mistress, *Madame de Luynes*. This is overheard by *De Chalais*, who loudly denounces the falsehood of the report; words ensue in consequence between him and the Abbé, and a duel is to be fought between them at 6 the next morning. At this moment news is brought of the disgrace of *Richelieu*, and of the appointment of *De Chalais*. The duel is however to take place all the same. The *Duc de Chartreux* here enters, accompanied by *Madame de Luynes*, between whom and the Duke it appears a marriage, until then undisclosed, had taken place two years before. The morning arrives, and the *Count de Chalais* is in his apartment preparing for the duel; he entrusts his secretary with two letters, one for his mother, the other for the *Duchesse de Chartreux*, to be delivered after a certain time. These letters are placed in a cabinet. Suddenly the Duchess enters, informs him that *Richelieu* is restored, himself accused of treason; and intreats him to fly immediately. While they are together, the Duke, who is to be *De Chalais'* second, knocks at the door; the lady hastily retreats to a cabinet. They talk of the approaching duel; she overhears them; the Duke accidentally gets a glimpse of her, but does not suspect who she is; he retires; she emerges from her retreat, and intreats *De Chalais* to fly for safety; he will not listen; the hour arrives; she detains him; at length he breaks from her. He arrives too late at the place of combat; the Duke had fought instead and got wounded; he however re-attacks the Abbé, and wounds him dangerously. *De Chalais*, finding how matters stand at court, makes preparations to fly; the Duchess is to accompany him. The confiding Duke her husband is all this time inconscious of his wrongs. But discovery is at hand; *De Chalais's* hotel is searched by order of the Cardinal; among his papers the fatal letter to the Duchess is found; the Cardinal forwards it to the Duke; the latter is horror-struck, to find it a declaration of love; he secretly vows vengeance, and an exciting interview takes place between him and his wife. In the midst of it *De Chalais* arrives, and at the same moment it is announced that the officers of Government are in the house in search of him. The Duke anticipates them, forces *De Chalais* out, they fight, and *De Chalais* falls. The Duke returns, tells the officers that *De Chalais* has just destroyed himself, and announces to the Duchess that they must separate for ever.

The piece was heard with attention, and given out for to-morrow *nem. con.*

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A paper on Time by our valuable correspondent, M. L. G. in our next.

Several short articles, theatrical and miscellaneous, are unavoidably omitted.

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THE HALFPENNY MAGAZINE,

No. 10,

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